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Economic Research Service

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ERS is the main source of research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

Intellectual Property Rights in Federal Technology Transfer

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR15

Government Patenting and Technology Transfer examines the use of intellectual property rights in Federal technology transfer, focusing primarily on the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS uses patenting and licensing when a technology requires additional development by a private sector partner to yield a marketable product.

Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade, including special reports on hot topics. All reports, along with a calendar of future releases, are available at: www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook



Commodity Payments Shift to Higher-Income Households

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB6

Crop production is shifting to much larger farms. Since government commodity payments reflect production volumes for program commodities, payments are also shifting to larger farms. In turn, the operators of very large farms have substantially higher household incomes than other farm households, and as a result government commodity payments are also shifting to much higher income households, according to *Growing Farm Size and the Distribution of Farm Payments*.

Farm Income Still Highly Variable for Large Farms

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB7

Farm subsidy programs were introduced in the 1930s largely due to concern for chronically low, and highly variable, incomes of US farm households. Today commodity-based support programs are still prominent, though income and wealth of the average farm household now exceed that of the average nonfarm households. According to *Economic Well-Being of Farm Households*, farm income continues to be highly variable, but the farm households with the most variable income—those operating large farms—have substantial net worth, which cushions uncertain farm income.



Options for Conservation Program Design

A multitude of design decisions influence the performance of voluntary conservation programs. These Economic Briefs explore the implications of decisions policymakers and program managers must make about who is eligible to receive payments, how much can be received, for what action, and the means by which applicants are selected:

- 1) Greening Income Support and Supporting Green www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB1
- 2) Better Targeting, Better Outcomes www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB2
- 3) Participant Bidding Enhances Cost Effectiveness www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB3
- 4) Contrasting Working Land and Land Retirement Programs www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB4
- 5) Rewarding Farm Practices Versus Environmental Performance www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EB5



Liberalization of International Dairy Markets Would Reduce Supplies, Increase Value

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR16

Trade Liberalization in International Dairy Markets: Estimated Impacts is the first of two articles that examine the forces shaping international dairy markets (*this one is economic model-based*). These forces include changing consumer demand in developing and developed economies; technological advances in production, distribution, and marketing; product innovation; globalization; and the possibility of fundamental dairy policy reform brought about through multilateral trade negotiations. According to these articles, international dairy policy reform would result in lower global supplies of milk and dairy products, higher world dairy prices, and higher value of dairy trade.

Corn Production Costs Vary Widely Among U.S. Producers

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB7

According to *Characteristics and Production Costs of U.S. Corn Farms, 2001*, corn production costs per bushel vary considerably among U.S. producers, depending on yields, farm location, tillage practices, irrigation, previous field usage, enterprise size, and weather. In 2001, the operating and ownership costs per bushel for corn ranged from an average of \$1.08 for the 25 percent of U.S. producers with the lowest costs to an average of \$2.98 for the 25 percent with the highest costs. Heartland corn producers had the lowest costs per bushel on average. Corn producers with small corn enterprises had the highest costs per bushel due to their lower-than-average corn yields.



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